

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mildred Cruzat

PERSON

Cruzat, Mildred, 1927-

Alternative Names: Mildred Cruzat;

Life Dates: February 17, 1927-July 28, 2021

Place of Birth: Detroit, Michigan, USA

Residence: Chicago, IL

Occupations: Civic Leader

Biographical Note

Mildred Cruzat was born in Detroit, Michigan on February 17, 1927. The third of four children, she attended public schools in Detroit and then spent a year at Highland Park Junior College in Detroit. Following that, she went to New York, where she attended the American School of Ballet at Carnegie Hall.

While studying in New York, Cruzat worked as a sales associate at Bloomingdale's, but after completing her ballet training she joined the Larry Steele Smart Affair dance troupe, based in New York and Atlantic City, New Jersey. In 1950, she went to Ziggy Johnson's School of Ballet in her native Detroit, where she became an instructor. That same year she also performed with Shuffle Along in a Broadway performance. Cruzat's next destination was St. Louis, where in 1951 she worked as a performer on the Spider Burke TV Show, the first African American television show in the St. Louis market. After her departure from the program, Cruzat spent many years raising her three children.

Cruzat resumed dancing in 1975, working with the Joseph Holmes Dance Theatre in Chicago, where she stayed for five years. In 1981, Cruzat joined the Tony Wilson Dance Company and the Bell School of Performing Arts as an instructor of children's and adult ballet and fitness. Cruzat joined the Chicago Urban League in 1983, working in the Young Parents Center, teaching fitness and dance to young mothers. That same year, she opened the Millie Cruzat Total Fitness Center, where she is still an instructor to all ages for fitness and dance. Cruzat joined the COPE program at the University of Chicago in 1985 as an instructor of dance for teenagers with children. In 1987, Cruzat joined the Beethoven Elementary School staff as a ballet instructor and remained there for eight years, and in 1992, was hired by Lake Meadows Fitness Center as an instructor. She held that position until 1995. In 2002, Cruzat joined the Stewart

Modeling Agency, where she continues to work as a model.

In addition to owning her own fitness center, modeling and instructing, Cruzat was active in a number of organizations. She was a member of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, and she served on the boards of the Joseph Holmes Dance Troupe and the Katherine Dunham Retrospective. She was an avid tennis player, and in 1973 was a quarterfinalist in the Women's 35 Singles at the American Tennis Association National Championships. She devoted her life to fostering the development of African American children through dance and fitness. Cruzat lived in Chicago. She had three children.

Cruzat was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 26, 2003.

Cruzat passed away on July 28, 2021.

Related Entries

Northeastern High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

HS diploma

Alger Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Highland Park Junior College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

1 year

Carnegie Hall Dance School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bloomingdales [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1947 to 1949]

Worker

Larry Steele [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1949 to 1950]

Dancer

Delete [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1950 to 1955]

Dancer

Joseph Holmes [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1975 to 1980]

Dancer

Rainbow/PUSH [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Joseph Holmes School of Dance [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Katherine Dunham [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member